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# THE WORD OF GOD A NATION'S LIFE.

# A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

# BIBLE CONVENTION

OF THE

## CONFEDERATE STATES.

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, MARCH 19th, 1862.

By Rev. GEORGE F. PIERCE, D.D.
Bishop of the Methodist E. Church.

AUGUSTA, GA:
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AUGUSTA, MARCH 20TH, 1862.

BISHOP G. F. PIERCE, D.D.:

Dear Brother—The undersigned have been appointed a Committee by the Bible Convention, now in session in this City, "to ask a copy of your sermon, to superintend its publication, and to devise the ways and means for publishing the same." Believing that its circulation in our Confederate States will be productive of great good, and earnestly desiring an early compliance with the wishes of the Convention, we subscribe ourselves,

Your obedient servants,

J. O. A. CLARK, } COM.
J. A. ANSLEY, }

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AUGUSTA, MARCH 20TH, 1862.

MESSRS CLARK and ANSLEY:

Dear Brethren—Your note has been received, requesting a copy of my discourse before the Bible Convention for publication. I did not anticipate this call, and am not ready to furnish the manuscript, but will comply at an early day with the request of the Convention. Your expressed belief, that the publication will be "productive of great good," overcomes my reluctance to the labor of preparation. If the sermon shall contribute any thing in bringing the people to live by the Word of the Lord, I shall feel that I have not lived in vain.

Yours fraternally,

G. F. PIERCE.

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# A SERMON.

"That he might make thee know, that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."—DEUTERONOMY, viii: 3.

"The things which were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." The narratives of the old Testament are not to be regarded as simple paragraphs in general history—mere links connecting, in consecutive order, the events of the olden time, but as embodying great principles in human society and in the divine administration, vital alike to the well-being of the one and the uniformity of the other. God is always the same; and the Bible, while it records the actions of men, is really the history of God, and as "with Him there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning," we learn from His past procedure what we may expect as to His present and future government. This fact being fully apprehended, we have a key to the dispensations of Providence, and need not greatly err in interpreting current events or in speculations as to the future. While in the Mosaic economy, there were many statutes, local and temporary, having their origin and use in what was peculiar to an introductory dispensation, yet among them are laws of universal and permanent obligation—principles ordained of God for all time, and perpetuated for the instruction of mankind, in the lasting records of the Church.

Government is an institution of Heaven: the powers that be are ordained of God. It is true, the Scriptures do not designate any particular form of government as best—nor are they eclectic as between the various theories which have challenged the suffrage of mankind; but as the condition precedent to the divine blessing, the duties of rulers and subjects are distinctly defined, and conformity to them urged by all that is precious in a nation's hopes, and by all that is fearful in the just judgment of Almighty God. It is true, that many features of the Jewish polity were rudimental, introductory, and intended to teach the great lessons of dependence and obedience, as well as to meet for the time being the local necessities of tribes and families. Patriarchal supremacy, the subordinate authority of the chiefs of clans, and, under them, the heads of houses were all necess-

ary to local government, but were wholly inadequate for general purposes. Similarity of institutions was too feeble a bond of unity, and the elements of discord and disintegration were too strong to be neutralized by the perpetually diluting memories of a common descent and the traditional marvels of Egypt, the wilderness and the land of Canaan. Before their settlement in the Land of Promise, the children of Israel, however distinct as a people, were not a *nation* in the organic sense of that word; and their governmental condition was elementary, and the *forms* of authority were simple—yet sufficient for order and prompt action. While the law did not abrogate these institutions, and the theocracy to be inaugurated did not supercede them, God was all the time educating them to broader views of their destiny, and to more exalted conceptions of their spiritual relations, and of the high functions they were to perform as a chosen people among the nations of the earth.

The disciplinary process by which the Jews were conducted through their singular history from bondage to national independence, power and prosperity, looked to two grand objects—one of which has been largely overlooked in our perusal of the historic records of the Old Testament. One purpose, and the primary one, was to train up a people to a nationality, favorable in the plans of Providence for the introduction of Messiah's kingdom: the other and the collateral one, secondary in order, yet vastly important to mankind, was, that taking the *Jew* as the type of his race, God might develope the sources of weakness and danger—the probable points of departure from the true and the right way—the temptations most likely to corrupt and deteriorate—the elements of decay, overthrow and extinction. The Jews, with all their folly, ingratitude and perverseness, were fair specimens of human nature; and an impartial record of individual experience or national history, would show pride, unbelief, and forgetfulness of God in forms as revolting and under circumstances as provoking, as any furnished by Ephraim or Judah.

Moses, in the address of which the text is a part, exhorts the children of Israel to obey all the commandments of the Lord their God—reminds them of the way along which they had been led, of the afflictions which they had endured, and the deliverances wrought for them—interprets for them the programme of divine Providence, and declares the ulterior object to have been that they might know, that "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

The lowest construction which these words will bear—and doubtless the doctrine is true—is, that man's animal physical life is not sus-

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tained by bread alone, but by any thing that God may appoint and sanctify for nutriment; that His blessing first gave the earth its fertility and continues it, and if He were to command the air to sustain us, it would be equally obedient.

But the text has a higher meaning. It teaches that not only our being, but our well-being depends upon conformity to the divine word—that life, in its lowest gradation, as predicable of man, is not sustained by the natural law of adaptation of means to ends, and can neither be developed, prolonged nor made happy, outside of the will and word of the Lord—that bread, though ordained as the staff of life, does not nourish by virtue of its chemical properties, but by the blessing of the Lord—that the transgression of the divine law, by intemperance—excess in the use of what God supplies or allows—poisons, destroys, entails disease and death; that life is to be regarded not as a physiological fact, but a moral endowment, deriving its dignity and value from its religious use, the moral appropriation of its powers, its spiritual relations, and its possible eternal sequences. The words, "man liveth," though a simple form of speech, are nevertheless compound in their signification. "Man" is a generic term, and stands for the race; "liveth" is concrete, and includes man as an individual being, as a member of the community, as a citizen of the country; and the whole comprehension of the phrase is, that man, considered as an independent personality; that human society, in its aggregate; the church, as an ecclesiastical organization; the State, as a body politic, are all under the same general law of dependence, subjection and obedience, as the condition of life, honor, prosperity and perpetuity.

We have assembled under very peculiar circumstances. As a people, we are in the midst of revolution. Our secession from the old Federal Union, and the inauguration of a new Confederacy, have not only dissolved the political ties which connected us with the Northern States, but have broken up our religious societies, our benevolent institutions, and thrown us upon new organizations to meet our responsibilities as a Christian people to the world around us. It has seemed to me appropriate, therefore, to waive, in the discussion of the subject chosen, the special views and individual applications which the words would justify and even demand under ordinary circumstances, and to content myself in a brief discourse upon a few leading ideas, as they apply to society and the State.

The chapter opens with the implied doctrine, that the test of true allegiance to God, and the security of a quiet and peaceable life in all

godliness and honesty, is in universal obedience to the divine commandments.

This is a broad, perhaps a startling proposition; but it is the starting point of all sound and safe reasoning on the question of duty, either personal, social or political. Obedience, to be sincere, must be entire. Neither God's authority nor man's real interests, will allow of any limitation. All religion consists in recognising the law and glory of our Maker—submitting to duty because it is His will, and not because it is a decision of our reason. The authority of the divine statute must be most solemnly regarded; otherwise, outward conformity is no proof of inward loyalty. To prevent delusion, this thought must be borne in mind, or the sacrifices we make to our own pride and selfishness may assume the name and claim the reward of religious service. While the will of God is absolute and binding, even when the reasons of its enactments do not appear, still to manifest the nature and perfection of His government, He has been pleased to declare the benefit of His laws, and these appeal so strongly to our instincts and our solicitations of interest, as to constrain our admiration and homage, and, under powerful impressions of reverence and fear, we sometimes resolve upon and pledge fidelity and service. But God, who knows the latent propensity of evil in our nature, may often address us as he did the children of Israel, when they vowed to do all that he had commanded. "The people have well said all they have spoken; O, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children forever!" To prove them, to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or no, He humbled them, suffered them to hunger and thirst, led them through a variety of difficult circumstances, favored them with many miraculous deliverances. They were thwarted and they were indulged, disappointed in their expectations and surprised by their mercies, punished for their sins that they might be admonished, and pardoned that they might be encouraged. But they were slow to learn the lessons of Providence. Distrust, murmuring, ingratitude, disobedience, marked all their history. Failing in the fundamental principle of submission and reference to God, they sought out many inventions. To say nothing now of the evil leaven of pride, self-will, the imitation of the multitude to do evil, which permeated their domestic life and social manners, very soon forgetting all the precautionary counsels of Moses, all the wonders of their own marvellous annals and their peculiar covenant relations, the practical recognition of their invisible King became an abstraction—a tradition without authority and a fable

without a moral. They sought to live by bread alone, to prosper without virtue, to fight without divine warrant, and to conquer without celestial aid. The word of the Lord was buried amid the rubbish of their desecrated temple. The altars, the high places, every green tree, the enthroned abominations of the heathen, revealed a nation of backsliders and idolators, and finally of captives and exiles.

To conserve a nation, that word of the Lord so often announced in the Bible, "THE LORD REIGNETH," must be recognised, acknowledged, practically believed. Incorporated in the Constitution, confessed by the chief magistrate, re-echoed by subordinate rulers, pervading the legislation of the country, presiding over public opinion, it will be a safe-guard in revolution, a guide in peace, a Pharos, beaming light and hope upon the future. Political morality would never have been deemed a thing of no concern, an article of barter, bandied about the market places of the land, if men had not first imagined that the Most High did not regard the actions of men and administer justice among the nations. A perverted public sentiment, largely tinctured with atheism, which excludes God from the affairs of earth, and confines Him, (if it admit His existence at all,) to heaven and heavenly things, is a fruitful source of venality and corruption in high places and low places, of insubordination, of commercial fraud and infidelity to contracts, of impious legislation and wide-spread contamination. Our republican fathers wisely separated the Church from the State; their degenerate successors madly separated the State from Heaven. It has been the fashion to theorise and decide on politics, as if Christianity were not a superior, supreme law, and as though God had abandoned his book and his rights to the chances of a doubtful contest. Statesmanship has become an earthly science, a philosophy without religion, and a system of expediency without a conscience. In discussing systems of finance, commerce, tariffs, international relations, who insists on moral causes, on the dependence of the nations on Him who turns the seasons round, dispenses the changes and destinies of governments, and cannot, and will not be forgotten, without rebuke and judgment?

Loose and licentious notions of liberty are the legitimate out-growth of ignoring the supremacy of God. Vicious maxims in trade become current; capital is invested in enterprises which war against morality; vice puts on the livery of fashion and becomes bold by patronage; the administration of justice grows lax, in morbid sympathy with a false philanthropy; unpunished crime gangrenes society; and deified wealth rides over principle and merit and talent, and a hollow, heartless selfishness holds carnival over the wreck of every virtue.

The voice of the multitude, the example of the great, the power of money, constitute an inquisition so virulent and overbearing that reproof is dumb; the testimony of the Church is paralyzed, and, if from the wilderness which popular sin has made, there comes out some fearless prophet of Heaven, threatening the wrath to come, society, demoralised by indulgence and blinded by long impunity, rains upon his honest head the epithets, *bigot*, *enthusiast*, *fanatic*, *hypocrite*, and rushes on unchecked to its doom. Men may philosophise, speculate, declaim, but God *will* reign. He never abdicates or dies. His glory He will not give to another. We are not our own, but men under authority. *In morals we have no rights of legislation.* We have a Master in heaven. His title to reverence is indisputable; His claim to homage and obedience inalienable. We *must* render to God the things which are God's. If we would be a Christian nation, what the law commands or allows must never contravene the behests of Heaven. Nations have a sort of collective unity, and between rulers and people there is a reciprocal responsibility, and if there be connivance in evil, each is amenable for the guilt of the other. If the executive, or legislative, or judicial department bring the law or policy of the country into conflict with the revealed economy of God, the people should remonstrate, vindicate the divine right, exhaust the remedies in their power, and, if they cannot reform, at least fix the burden where it belongs. If the people grow corrupt—impious, and claim the natural right to do moral wrong, then the government must set itself to honor God, by becoming a terror to them that do evil. Rulers must not bear the sword in vain, if they would fear God and live by his word.

The Church, too, must cease to shrink before the cant of those godless demagogues, who, when the good seek to array public opinion against vice, and to bring law into harmony with the Bible, preach liberty of conscience, all the more vociferously because they have long since ceased to have any conscience or rule of life, save selfish indulgence. Her testimony against evil must be clear, intrepid, meek but firm, patient but unwearied. The insane cry of popery and priestcraft must no longer smother the thunders of the pulpit; and the theory of a Christianity which converts people without a change of heart or life—liberal enough to let men do as they please for the sake of their name and their money—which grants indulgences for sin rather than be thought uncharitable, relaxes by an apochryphal canon the stringent, inexorable rules of purity and self-denial, must be met, routed, exiled; and the sacramental host must know, that if they would drink of the river whose streams make glad the city of God,

then must they fulfil the commission of His lips. The impregnation of government, law, art, eommeree, civilization, with her own pure, gentle, peaeeable, loving sentiments, is the predieted triumph of Christianity: and we approximate the glory of that millennial age, when we honor the divine word by believing its promises, fearing its threatenings, adopting its eounsels, practising its morals; when we magnify the Lord and exalt His name; when we recognise His providenee, beseech His aid, deprecate His wrath, by confession, petition and reformation. I am glad that our young Republie aeknowledges God in her Constitution, and ealls on Him to witness the rectitude of her aims and objeets. I am glad that our President, in several offieial aets, "seeing that we have no might against the great mnltitude eoming upon us," has sought to turn the eyes of the people to the Lord their God; and that, in his late inaugural, he coneludes with an earnest appeal to God, and a thrilling deelaration of his own abiding trust in the justiee and merey of the Lord Almighty. I am glad that the people have responded again and again to the call to fast and pray with unwonted earnestness and universality. Amid much that is discouraging to the pious, in view of abounding iniquity, these national acts, interpreted by Scriptural examples, inspire hope that God will vouchsafe to the intercessions of the faithful few our deliverance and liberty. O, my countrymen, let us reverence the Lord of Sabaoth, and let us remember that our country is to be preserved and perpetuated, not by science, wealth, patriotism, population, armies or navies, but by every word that proeeedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. "Hear me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you while ye be with Him, and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you."

Another word of the Lord, by which society is to be improved and the nation exalted to healthy, happy life, is His statute on the religious training of the young. On this subject, for a series of years, the policy of the eountry has been wrong and growing worse. The testimony of the Chureh has been timid, wavering and ineonsistent. In relation to it, the commandment of the Lord is explieit. The admonitions and counsels of the Bible are frequent, earnest and pointed, but a proud and petulant philosophy, full of coneeit and flippant maxims, has eorrupted both opinion and practice, and eirculated ideas full of deadly poison, blighting to charaeter and fatal to all government. The primal cause of well nigh all the evils whieh affliet soeiety, is to be found in defeetive family discipline, example and instruetion, and in a nearly total disregard of the injunetions of the Bible, the word of the Lord upon this subject. To train up a ehild in the nurture and admonition

of the Lord, is a lofty commission, a moral duty of the highest grade, next in responsibility to our personal salvation. To fulfil it in perfection, requires the highest order of intelleet and the deepest work of graee. According to the eapacity given, or that might be aequired, every parent is bound by the most solemn considerations, both personal and relative, temporal and eternal, to do what he ean in developing the immortal mind eommitted to his eharge into the highest style of charaeter. Admitting the intrinsie diffieulties of the task, I ean not forbear remarking, that the embarrassments most eomplained of ehiefly arise from substituting the Divine by human plans—the sternness of authority, arbitrary, imperious and passionate ; turbulent temper, venting themselves in petulanee and seolding ; an indiserimiinate use of the rod, or the bribery of weak eomplianees or irredeemable and unredeemed promises, or the postponement of all effort till the day of salvation is gone ; and all these in the faee of God's word, which says : "Fathers, provoke not your ehildren to wrath ;" "forbear threatening ;" "put away lying ;" "be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry ;" "he that loveth his son chasteneth him betimes." The Bible not only gives speeifie instruetion in all these things, but is itself the best instrument of diseipline. Its doetrines are to be taught, its prineiples explained, its motives urged, its promises applied, its threatenings announeed. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." For, says the Psalmist, God "established a testimony in Jaeob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their ehildren : that the generation to eome might know them, even the children which should be born : who should arise and deelare them to their ehildren : that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his eommandments." How wise, how benignant, how eonservative this statute ! A father dies without a will ; the division of his estate is settled by the arbitrament of law ; but if he failed to eommunieate the knowledge of God, who shall supply his omission, or make up to the wronged or defrauded ehild his lost heritage ? How natural and beautiful the Divine plan for transmitting truth ! Every parent a historian and preaeher ; every habitation a temple ; every path a school-house ; every bed a pious retreat, where age sinks to rest with the language of piety on its lips, and youth is hushed to repose by the musie of love in the words of heaven. Oh ! if the people would live by every word that proeeedeth from the mouth of God, what families ! how happy ; what ehildren ! how lovely ; what ehurehes !

how pure; what a nation! how great, and wise, and strong, having God so nigh in all that we call upon Him for.

What a departure from the word of the Lord must that be, which has accredited people with religion—*Bible religion*—and yet allowed them to live in the neglect of a primary duty, integral to personal piety, essential to Church progress, fundamental to public order and national greatness! Verily, the bread which we have been using may continue breath and being, but it is scanty, husky fare, and will fill the land with moral skeletons, tattered, hungry prodigals, too feeble to stand in virtue's ways, and too far off to return to our Father's house. If we would have our sons as plants, grown up in their youth; our daughters as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace; if we would enjoy the fatness, the sweetness, the wine of life, we must live by every word of God. We must come back to the law and to the testimony, and renouncing and denouncing all the pert infidel sayings of the times, all the cant of irresolution, the pleas of sloth, the pretences of a mock humility, set ourselves to realize that prophetic scene, bright with celestial promise—"and all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

It is due to the subject, and appropriate to the occasion, to say that the whole education of the country should be Christian. During the formative period of life, it is obviously the will of God, and to the interest of society, that the rising generation should be taught the knowledge of God, the mind developed in the light of the Bible, and the heart guarded from the contagion of bad example, and trained under a system decidedly evangelical. Science and religion should be united in indissoluble wedlock. The sanctities of the parental roof and the memories of pious instruction, should be perpetuated in the schoolhouse, the academy, the college. The interests at stake are too precious to be jeoparded by any omissions, or lapses, or intervals of neglect. The infidel policy of leaving the youthful mind unbiassed and free, is unsound in principle and impracticable in fact. It is a stratagem of the enemy of souls, too shallow to deceive a thinking man, and ought to spring the good to an instant occupancy of the ground, and a tenacious holding of it, by all the arts of love and mercy, the most assiduous pains-taking care, and the most devout supplications to God for needed help. The Christian denominations of the land have been seeking to do somewhat in this direction; but they have largely modified their plans, to forestall the charge of sectarianism, and escape the apprehended edge of reproach from their enemies. What! is it sectarian to teach a youth to fear God, to do

right, to love the country! Sectarian, to urge patriotism, benevolence, personal purity, by the sanctions of revealed religion! My brethren, if we would live by the word of the Lord, we must no longer compromise our duty to God and the country, by diluting our systems of education to suit carnal taste and worldly wisdom. We must prepare for the future. The conflict for dominion between light and darkness is progressing—the crisis is at hand. We must come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The young should be enlisted as conscripts of the Kingdom. Catechisms, Sunday schools, family religion, pastoral care, religious education, should all be levied upon, pressed into service, if we would save the landmarks of morality from the inundations of vice, and draw over the nation the shield of Omnipotence. Put the Bible in every house, an evangelical teacher in every school, a man of God in every pulpit—stir up, vitalize, intensify every agency for good in the Church; multiply by faith and prayer revivals of religion; seek, O seek, the instruction and conversion of the young; and then, when this terrible war is ended and peace reigns in all our borders, we shall have a state of society so bright, beautiful and blest, that time shall have no emblem of it in the past but Eden, and eternity no type in the future but heaven.

This history of the past, as well as the suggestions of the text, constrain me to add one more illustration of the general truth I have been expounding. The life of a nation, in the sense of stability, honor, credit, prosperity, depends largely upon the moral character of its rulers. Nor are these results regulated by merely natural causes. History, sacred and profane, attests that God's blessing is upon the good, and His curse sooner or later upon the bad. In the political creed of this country, a man's morals, his relations to God, have scarcely been thought of in his elevation to office. Party, party-service, order in rotation, have often determined the candidate, and, albeit he was the victim of notorious vices, the wire-worker reckoned advisedly upon rallying the strength of the party to his support, through his affinity with the vile on the one hand, and the unscrupulous devotion of all the rest to the platform, on the other. We are the victims to-day of this ungodly traffic in vice, of unscriptural theories of government, of selfish schemes of power, of the fanatical ambition to enthrone an idea born in the seething brain of a pseudo-philanthropy, which boldly avows that the Bible is a lie if it does not teach its creed, and God to be rejected if He does not endorse it.

The word of the Lord is, "provide out of all the people able men that fear God." "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted." "When the wicked beareth rule, the people

mourn." On the other side, a ruler "is a minister of God for good"—"a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," especially when sin is exalted, honored, enthroned in the high places of the land. In the divine administration, rulers are contemplated as the head and representatives of the people, even in hereditary governments; and it must be eminently so in an elective one. It is to be remembered, therefore, that the people must share in the judgments which the sins of rulers provoke. When these proud transgressors challenge the Divine Being by their reckless impiety, the retribution is often sudden and overwhelming, as when He smote Herod with worms; or a gradual blight, a living death, as in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. One mode of divine punishment, (and perhaps the most to be dreaded,) is to abandon a people to corruption, leave the disease to work its course without check. permit them to fill up the cup of their iniquity, and, when sin puts on the glare of renown and the robes of office, and dances in festal gaiety under the patronage of the great—when the floodgates are open, the impediments are gone, and pollution rolls like a flood—then, the clouds of wrath brew in the heavens above, and the Dead sea makes ready her grave beneath. Another mode is, to make the people mourn their folly, through the passions of their rulers, and then come wars, taxes, oppression, waste of blood and treasure; or the clouds of heaven are sealed and the parched earth responds not to the tiller's toil; mildew blights the ungathered harvest, pestilence wastes population, or the red rain of battle drenches the land with sorrow, and captivity is the doom of the nation. We are beginning a new career. God help us to avoid the errors of the past, and, throwing off the shackles of parties, conventions and platforms, to abide by the word of the Lord. Let us have a Christian nation in fact as well as in name, that God may be as a wall of fire round about this young Confederacy, and a glory in the midst of her.

There is one other departure from the word of the Lord, common to the policy of the country, adopted and pursued by well nigh all, which demands and deserves rebuke. I mean the greed of gain, the deification of money. The subject is too large for discussion now, but a word to the wise will not be amiss.

In this very chapter, Moses admonished the people against the self-same evil into which we have sadly run, and notifies them that the only security against the temptations of an all-surrounding abundance, was to remember, fear and obey God. "Beware, lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein;

and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God." Alas! this is the crime and the curse of America. We have prospered, grown rich, luxurious, proud, and have said in our hearts, "my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth."

The history of the world confirms the testimony of the Bible as to the moral dangers of accumulated treasure. Wealth is favorable to every species of wickedness. Luxury, licentiousness of manners, selfishness, indifference to the distresses of others, presumptuous confidence in our own resources—these are the accompaniments of affluence, whenever the safe-guards of the Divine word, both as to the mode of increase and the proper use, are disregarded. As to the higher forms of character and civilization, unless regulated and sanctified by Scripture truth and principle, *opulence* has always been one of the most active causes of individual degeneracy and of national corruption. Under the influence of its subtle poison, moral principle decays; Patriotism puts off its nobility and works for hire; Bribery corrupts the judgment seat, and Justice is blinded by gifts; Benevolence suppresses its generous impulses, and counts its contributions by fractions; Religion, forgetting the example of its Author and the charity of its mission, pleads penury, and chafes at every opportunity for work or distribution; Covetousness devours widows' houses and grows sleek on the bread of orphans; Usury speculates on providence and claims its premium, alike from suffering poverty and selfish extravagance; Extortion riots upon the surplus of the rich and the scrapings of the poor, enlarges its demand as necessity increases, and, amid impoverishment, want and public distress, whets its appetite for keener rapine and with unsated desire, laps the last drop from its victim and remorselessly sighs for more. The world counts gain as godliness, prosperity as virtue, fraud as talent; and *money*, MONEY, MONEY, is the god of the land, with every house for a temple, every field for an altar, and every man for a worshipper. The Church, infected by popular example, adopts the maxims of men, grades the wages of her servants by the minimum standard, pays slowly and gives grudgingly, and stands guard over her treasures, as if Providence were a robber, and they who press the claims of Heaven came to cheat and to steal.

Whenever the conservative laws of accumulation and distribution, as prescribed in the Bible, are ignored, then not only does the love of money stimulate our native depravity, but the hoarded gain furnishes facilities for uncommon wickedness. The attendant evils are uniform. They have never failed in the history of the past. When

commerce, manufactures and agriculture pour in their treasures, then, without the counteracting power of Scripture truth and Gospel grace, they infallibly breed the sins which have been, under God, the executioners of nations. Such is the suicidal tendency of unsanctified wealth, that the greater the prosperity of a people the shorter the duration. The virulence of the maladies superinduced destroy suddenly, and that without remedy. Now mark how apposite, how prophetic, how descriptive, the word of the Lord: "*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts.*" "He that *maketh haste* to be rich shall not be innocent." "He that *hasteth* to be rich hath an evil eye." How these passages rebuke the spirit of speculation, the greedy desires, the equivocal expedients, the high-pressure schemes of the people! "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded nor trust in uncertain riches." O, ye who make, and save, and hide, and hoard, hear ye the word of the Lord: "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten; your gold and silver is cankered, and the *rust* of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire." O, ye who strut and shine in plumage plucked from the poor and needy, "ye have received your consolation;" "weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you."

One of the moral secrets of this *wretched* war, as we *call* it, (perhaps it may turn out to be *merciful*,) in my judgment, is, to arrest the corruption of prosperity—to unsettle, agitate, break loose the people from their plans and hopes—dethrone their *cotton idol*, and, by upheaving the incrustations imposed by long years of peace and security, to let into our darkened minds the light of truth and ventilate the dormant conscience. Infatuated by the love of the world, sensualized, fast-rooted in our pride and forgetfulness of God, the Spirit of grace has been shut out, the hearts of men were impervious, through the power of dominant, over-mastering habit, and the preaching of the Gospel as fruitless as would have been the tinkling of a cymbol. The Church has been sliding into the world: the broad Scriptural lines of demarkation were well nigh passed. Piety had grown thin, meagre, unreal. Christian manhood was merged in a mawkish spirit of compliance—a supple, sickly liberality, ready to break down the last barrier to the encroachments of fashion and the demands of an ungodly age. We needed reform. The shocks and vibrations of war's terrible batteries were necessary to shake the drowsy, stagnant atmosphere, to change the currents of thought, to break down the dominion of old ideas, and set us free from the selfish

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